DIGITAL
COMPETENCES
DEVELOPMENT
SYSTEM

DCDS POLICY INFLUENCE TOOLKIT

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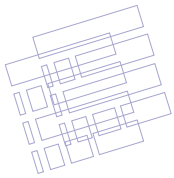

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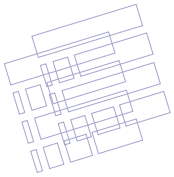

INTRODUCTION

The DCDS project established a framework to provide low-digitally skilled adults with the basic digital and transversal competences needed for employment, personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship. The project developed an open, innovative multilingual Digital Competences Development System (DCDS) and used it to provide non-formal training to low-skilled adults in different European countries. Being completely aligned with the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens – Dig Comp 2.1, the project contributes to the promotion of its use by non-formal training providers and its adoption by European policy makers active on adult education and training, social and digital inclusion as well as employment policies.

In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, advocacy is defined as “the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal”. Advocacy can consist of any activity carried out by an individual or a group which aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions. It is a means of seeking change in governance, attitudes, power, social relations and institutional functions.

Advocacy at all levels of action has been a main priority of all partners throughout the DCDS project.

This document draws on their experience, both within the DCDS project and beyond. It consists of a series of tools for influencing policies; developing a strategy to understand the forces supporting and opposing the desired policy change; suggesting concrete responses, in order to achieve the milestone changes in the process; establishing an action plan for meeting the desired policy objective; and designing a monitoring system.

The toolkit is for organizations working in the field of digital skills development and e-inclusion, but could be used by a broader range of adult education providers and organizations that wish to develop their policy influence strategy at local, regional and national level.

This toolkit is closely linked to the DCDS policy recommendations, which suggest clear policy objectives related to increasing the number of adults having basic digital skills and identify the changes needed to support this policy outcome. The DCDS policy recommendations also provide effective proposals on how to include the DCDS project outcomes within the services addressed to adults with low digital skills and empower key stakeholders in formulating innovative integrated policies for developing and recognizing adult citizens’ basic digital competences.

The DCDS Policy Influence Toolkit includes a set of steps for the related stakeholders that would like to influence policy makers (and ultimately policy making). The actions it includes are presented in detail in the following sections.

We invite all the readers of this toolkit to consult the recommendations as well as the other project outputs uploaded in the DCDS project website (http://www.dcds-project.eu/).

1.Understanding the policy context at European, national and local level

The first step to take in order to initiate a policy influence process, is having a clear picture of the policy context. An insightful understanding of the context leads to more effective interventions and thus greater impact.

When an organization plans to influence public policies, it is necessary to carefully take into account the level in which it will act (European, national and regional/local).

Afterwards, an analysis of the following aspects is needed:

- the actors who have a stake in those policies (beneficiaries, representatives, civil society organisations);
- the interested policy makers (public authorities and politicians);
- the various policy formulation processes;
- the existing policies.

When this initial desk research is done, we suggest contacting the relevant actors within the civil society sector or the final beneficiaries representatives, in order to understand whether networks or coalitions and actions are already in place for the policies you are interested in impacting. Afterwards, you can decide whether your organisation would like to proceed alone or together with other peers and start taking contact with public authorities and politicians (possibly in this order).

A key final step to be taken is an assessment of what are considered as feasible and desirable changes in the policies. This will be extremely useful to evaluate your policy influence.

CASE STUDY

An overview of the policy context in which the DCDS partners operated is available in the context analysis report drafted by the DCDS consortium[1]. The European context is provided by ALL DIGITAL and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), while the national and regional contexts include Latvia, Romania, Greece, Spain and Emilia Romagna and Umbria regions in Italy.

[1] http://www.dcds-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/DCDS-WP2-Context-Analysis-Report.pdf

2.Identify your target groups

A very broad range of stakeholders are usually involved in the policy-making process, both officially and unofficially. Each of these different actors is pursuing their own agenda and attempting to influence other stakeholders as well as the relevant policymakers[2]. In order to have an effective policy influence strategy, it is important to build strong external linkages[10] with relevant stakeholders.

In the DCDS case, it is necessary to identify the stakeholders that work on digital competence development of adult citizens, specifically using DigComp, and might have interests and resources to impact or be impacted by the changes promoted.

2.1. Target groups at the European level

The European policymakers to be targeted include European Commission representatives along with MEPs working on digital topics. In the period 2014-2019, the Directorate Generals of the Commission working on Digital Competences were: Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC[3]); Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL[4]) and Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT)[5]. In the period 2019-2024, the Digital Competences are most probably part of the following portfolios: Europe fit for the digital age; Innovation, education, culture and youth; and Jobs and Social Rights.

In addition, representatives from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and European Committee of the Regions (CoR) are also considered to be a target group of high significance.

TOOL

The Publications Office of the European Union is an interinstitutional office whose task is to publish the publications of the institutions of the European Union. Its core activities include production and dissemination of legal and general publications in a variety of paper and electronic formats, managing a range of websites providing EU citizens, governments and businesses with digital access to official information and data. In their website, one can also find the “who is who” tool[6] which is extremely useful to find the position, title and contact details of officers working on digital related matters.

[2] http://www.inasp.info/uploads/filer_public/25/22/25221e68-5ab8-406e-a25f-f9fa3ec9ca5a/d_eipm_toolkit_module_1_practical_handbook.pdf
[3] https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/education-youth-sport-and-culture_en
[4] https://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp
[5] https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/communications-networks-content-and-technology_en
[6] https://op.europa.eu/en/web/who-is-who/
[7] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf

TIP

The political guidelines[7] given by the President of the European Commission 2019-2024 focus on six ambitions for Europe. In the chapter "A Europe fit for the digital age", the President states "My priority will be to get Europe up to speed on digital skills for both young people and adults by updating the Digital Education Action Plan. We need to rethink education by using the potential the internet provides to make learning material available to all, for example by the increased use of massive open online courses. Digital literacy has to be a foundation for everyone".

Key opinion makers such as research institutes (i.e. EU Science Hub), agencies of the EU (i.e. Cedefop), universities and companies running research on digital skills could also be important target groups. Additional stakeholders could professional networks (e.g. CEPIS).

2.2 Target groups at the national, regional and local level

At the national level, the target groups include ministries responsible for education/training, labour/employment, ICT/Digitalisation and social affairs; public bodies and agencies responsible for implementing financial support for digital skills development programs; public employment agencies; as well as other stakeholders working in the education field (i.e. University networks). At the regional and local level, organisations should aim to target regional and local authorities, private stakeholders, libraries (and their networks) and training and adult education centres (i.e. CPIA in Italy).

CASE STUDY

LIKTA as the leading information society and ICT association in Latvia works on 3 principal levels to achieve the goals of information society development and digital skills support:

- Initiating and contributing to National level policy documents and strategies - LIKTA has contributed to several national high level policy documents programs such as the Information Society Development Guidelines for 2014-2020, which is the current National eGovernment strategy.
- Cooperation with representatives of the public sector, information and communications technology (ICT) sector and NGOs in order to ensure stable economic growth, the individual development of inhabitants and an active civil society.
- LIKTA as an industry association gathers around 160 member organizations/companies and represents industry in various working groups and policy planning initiatives, such as a Working Group on Vocational Education and Training as well as a Working Group on Data protection.

2.3 Coalitions, networks and alliances in support of policy influence

Building coalitions, networks and alliances is a matter of great importance for the efficacy and sustainability of the advocacy activities. A reliable and extensive network of key allies able to support your work could be the key for success when it comes to policy influence. This procedure includes exchange of experience, knowledge and expertise and can also lead to an increase of your visibility.

CASE STUDY

CSF has been a member of the National Coalition for digital competences since 2016. The coalition was promoted by the Italian Digital Agenda in line with the European initiative Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs. The Coalition is based on the collaboration of public institutions national and local, professional communities, non-profit organizations, employers' associations and trade unions and other private subjects.

CASE STUDY

The Hellenic Open University is a member of the Greek National Coalition for Digital Skills and Jobs, that implements actions under the framework of the New Skills Agenda for Europe. Since its establishment in 2014, it has set separate related committees, developed the "National Action Plan on Digital Skills and Jobs in Greece" (2016), and is officially recognized by the European Commission (2018). The key priority of the National Coalition is the diffusion of EU policy on digital skills at national level, the establishment of synergies among members of the Coalition in order to enhance digital skills and eliminate the digital skills gap at all levels of the economy and society through concrete actions as well as the participation of a wide range of stakeholders (private sector, NGOs, Civil Society, hubs, incubators etc.). Since its establishment, its members have conducted various activities related to education, employment, certification and promotion of digital skills.

3. Choose a policy influence method

Every effective advocacy strategy needs appropriate methods in order to achieve the desired impact , some of which we present below. The suggestions that follow are ad hoc activities and initiatives to plan in parallel to your daily work. Should you want to improve your communication strategy to reach more policy impact[8], please refer to the Annex1.

3.1 Direct communication with policy makers and key stakeholders

Direct contacts and face to face meetings with key stakeholders of the public and the private sector are central in the policy influence process. Policymakers are quite busy and thus not always available to meet organisations alone. Consider finding peers with similar policy messages before calling a meeting with them.

CASE STUDY

EAEA and the Lifelong Learning Platform initiated in 2015 an Interest Group for Lifelong Learning at the European Parliament. The Interest Group on Lifelong Learning brings together civil society representatives and MEPs to discuss key issues connected to lifelong learning with strong emphasis on adult education. This group helps EAEA promote a wider and more holistic understanding of lifelong learning and acts as a "watchdog" to what the European Union is doing. The group continued its work after the May 2019 elections. http://www.lll-interestgroup.eu/

TOOL

Before engaging in any face-to-face meetings with decision-makers it could be useful to develop a 'Sticky Questions' paper apart from the core and tailored messages. A 'Sticky Questions' paper can be a useful working document for internal use. It enables everyone involved in the advocacy process to give clear, accurate and consistent answers to the most common questions related to the project, particularly any controversial – or 'sticky' - ones. With your colleagues, brainstorm a list of common questions around your issue. You should give particular attention to any controversies relating to the issue addressed by your advocacy and that you will most likely be asked to comment on or justify.

1. Draft short answers (not more than one or two paragraphs long) to the questions. The answers should be carefully worded, accessible yet unambiguous and comprehensive. Ideally, you should be able to give these answers out without needing to explain them further. You may therefore want to try your answers out on external contacts in order to help you pitch them at the right level.

[8] http://www.politicsandideas.org/?page_id=2248

2. Your 'Sticky Questions' paper is a living document. It should be developed through a series of drafts so that different people can contribute to the answers. It should be regularly updated as and when further response is received to advocacy activities and following media interviews[9].

3.2 Organisation of multiplier events, awards or flash mobs and participation in relevant meetings

Another mean to achieve policy influence is organising multiplier events. Multiplier events can be targeted to peers as well as policy makers and key stakeholders at local, regional and national levels. This is a great opportunity to disseminate the results of a cause. The agenda should be drafted bearing in mind the organisation's objective. When inviting policy-makers to events, bare in mind that they will most probably come if you assign them a prominent role (speakers, commenters, ec.). Policymakers can be invited to give a speech or to comment on a particular output/initiative via a panel discussion. After each multiplier event a report should summarise key discussion points, opinions / suggestions expressed and the final outcomes. The reports can include a press release, link to video interviews and other dissemination materials.

An interesting way to raise awareness of a cause and increase visibility to a particular field is to give awards to inspiring projects, methodologies, people or organisations active on a certain topic. Both All Digital and EAEA have established annual awards to recognise and celebrate innovation and dedication in their respective areas of work.

A flash mob is a group of people who assemble suddenly in a public place, perform an unusual and seemingly pointless act for a brief time, then quickly disperse, often for the purposes of entertainment, satire, and artistic expression.

A popular and highly effective method of promoting your cause if you don't have the resources to organize an event, is to participate in conferences, workshops, meetings organized by other organizations/institutions. You can ask the organizer to contribute to a workshop, put a stand in a gallery walk or a marketplace, or simply distribute fliers during the event.

CASE STUDY

LIKTA is the national coordinator of the ALL DIGITAL Week in Latvia. Every year, citizens and entrepreneurs have the opportunity to participate in more than 600 face to face events provided by nearly 300 partners: ministries, state agencies, businesses, banks, schools and universities, libraries, municipal authorities and non-governmental organizations. This is one way LIKTA uses to contribute to the policies.

[9] https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf?864408&864408

3.3 Evidence of impact

The demonstration of the potential impact of a certain policy or initiative could be a powerful tool for the influence of related policies. The presentation of the successful outcome of the training on digital skills in the learners' life could be the most effective method of convincing policy makers about the importance and effectiveness of the cause. Think about collecting qualitative and/or quantitative data while implementing a certain activity that could be used to influence policies.

GOOD PRACTICE

ZEB Stephansstift is a training and education organisation dedicated to professional and voluntary activities in the field of social work, guided by protestant (belief and) values. Every four to five years ZEB Stephansstift organises an open meeting with politicians, experts and the general public, to present research on residential colleges for adult education in Niedersachsen, Germany, in order to influence the budget vote in the region. Due to the quality of the research and the fact that it is carried out by a reknown researcher, policymakers of all parties participate and actively discuss the matter[10].

3.4 Establishment of links with networks

Approaching and establishing links with(in) networks can be of vital relevance.

CASE STUDY

Since its creation, Esplai Foundation has had a strong vocation to influence public policy at state level. From the very beginning, the philosophy of the organization has been to collaborate closely through networks at different levels: local, regional, national and even international. In the same way, for some years now they have consciously applied the quadruple helix theory in all ICT projects involving administrations (public employment services), companies in the sector, educational centres and young people themselves. For this reason, they form alliances through business associations, associations of social professionals and platforms provided by local governments, autonomous and the general administration of the state. They consider as greatest strength the contact network that they have been weaving with the public administration and the private companies with which we have worked during these 20 years of trajectory.

[10] https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/arale-general-page-policy-makers-database-research-projects-results-presented-to-politicians/

CASE STUDY

Funded by the University of Perugia, the municipality of Foligno, the Umbria Region and the Province of Perugia, CSF is in close contact with local and regional authorities. This allowed the organisation to actively take part in the Digipass initiative promoted by Regione Umbria. "DigiPASS" are open public spaces, distributed throughout the Region, useful to accompany citizens and businesses in the use of digital services.

3.5 Participation in projects and campaigns

Participation in other related projects (EU and non-EU funded) and campaigns could also provide an organisation with fertile ground for influencing policy.

GOOD PRACTICE

Pane e Internet is a project funded by the Emilia-Romagna Region, within the framework of the Regional Digital Agenda, to encourage the development of digital skills of citizens in order to ensure full digital citizenship. The project has been running since 2009 and AECA, in charge of the project's central services since 2011, used it in the framework of the DCDS project both as a source of inspiration and as a resource. At the same time, DCDS was useful to connect the Pane e Internet project and the European policies, strengthening the policy influence of the organisation at the regional and local level. The final conference of DCDS was organised in Bologna, providing visibility to both projects.

3.6 Use of social media

The term 'social media' links to a range of different tools, each with distinctive characteristics. The increased use and importance of these tools has sometimes challenged the right to freedom of expression and access to information leading to a shake-up in traditional approaches to advocacy and campaigning. This has opened the way to a new form of 'digital activism'[11].

Each organization can make use of its own social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) to support a policy change. Social media, along with the organisation's website, can be used as a mean of reaching its target groups and make your voice heard. Social media facilitate the aggregation of small individual actions into meaningful collective results. This is possible through 'conversation', 'concretion' and 'collective action'. Online conversations create traffic and may well become 'viral' allowing you to spread your message quickly to vast numbers of people.

[11] https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf?864408&864408

GOOD PRACTICE

RIO/FOLAC, the interest-organisation and international unit for the 150 Swedish Folk High Schools, started to send newsletters by mail to more than 2000 selected national and local politicians in order to continuously inform them of the work that their members are doing. The newsletters are sent four times a year and they contain a mix of different news. Along with statistical information, the newsletter might narrate personal stories from folk high schools participants or focus on social issues and on how folk high schools can be part of political solutions. The author of the newsletter is a journalist that has been working for many years in adult education[12].

4. Convincing policymakers: Strategies to consider[13]

The attempt to convince policymakers to engage with a cause is definitely not an easy task but there are certain steps that can be taken in order to achieve the desired results. The strategies presented below can be adapted to the different contexts.

4.1 Find the right person(s)

It is important to do the necessary research before approaching a target. Choose a person who has the power to help and is interested in the field of digital competence. Ideally that would be a person with whom you already have a relationship of trust. Consider also approaching civil servants instead of directly addressing politicians, they often prepare the decisions of the minister (mayor, etc.).

4.2 Prepare yourself

Be prepared to promote the cause in any kind of informal contacts. You might get the opportunity at conferences, events etc. to address someone of influence for a few minutes. Make sure in advance that you are informed about the people you are going to meet on each occasion and prepare your arguments and your introductory speech in advance. Some prior understanding of their background and their objectives can be helpful. That way one can better demonstrate the benefits of the cause, thus making it more interesting.

[12] https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/arale-general-page-policy-makers-database-letters-for-change-influencing-policy-makers-by-mails/

[13] This part was based on the experience of the "Awareness Raising for Adult Learning and Education (ARALE)" project and has been adapted for the needs of the DCDS project - https://eaea.org/project/awareness-raising-for-adult-learning-and-education-arale/?pid=7548 .

CASE STUDY

AECA contributes at the regional level to the design (through government consultation processes), implementation and monitoring (by participating to the execution of government-funded initiatives and providing feedback on them) of VET-related policies of the Emilia Romagna regional government (RER), in different areas and towards different target groups.
In the welfare and inclusion area, AECA contributes to design and implement measures addressing fragile and vulnerable people under regional law 14/2015 (people suffering from addiction, vulnerable immigrants and others), measures for disabled adult and young people (Regional Fund for Disabilities), victims of human trafficking and violence (running in collaboration with RER the CHANCE project- Inclusion network).

AECA's involvement (through its members) in the actuation of regional policies and its constant dialogue and co-operation with over one thousand enterprises to respond to their training needs, allow AECA to gather important information and develop first-hand knowledge of social and economic trends and needs, and about policy implementation barriers and viable solutions. These become the object in multiple occasions of useful policy input and feedback to the regional government.

4.3 Be brief and clear

Try to make your point in the simplest possible way. Prepare a short presentation (2-3-minute-long) about the cause. This could include a presentation of the main points that the target might be interested in and the one action that you want him/her to take in order to support the cause. Examples, documentation and arguments should be provided after you caught the interest of your target.

TIP

In Annex2, you could find some policy messages suggested by the DCDS partners.

4.4 Provide facts and statements

It is insightful to have prepared a list of key facts regarding the cause. Such a list should concentrate on certain aspects of the cause that the policy makers are asked to invest in.

GOOD PRACTICE

In 2015, EAEA drafted a Manifesto to propose a Europe-wide effort to go one step up, to develop a knowledge society that can deal with the challenges of our time. The Manifesto contains figures on participation in Adult Education, good practices and key research findings on the benefits of adult learning to convince the readers about the need for a learning Europe.
In the last years, the Manifesto was widely disseminated at different levels. At the European level, the campaign was addressed to European institutions and other lifelong learning associations as well as through EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe); at the national, regional and local level the campaign was carried out by its 130 members all over Europe and the members of its members. The document was quoted many times by policymakers and considered as a useful tool by many adult education providers in Europe. In 2019, a new version of the Manifesto was published.

4.5 Bring in a learner's story

Adult learners' stories often make an abstract concept very real and understandable, so they often help convince policymakers that their support can really change people's lives. Learners' stories can be provided in written form, as videos or even by the learners themselves if they are willing to become ambassadors for their learning success. You could establish a pool of learners that could act as ambassadors or role-models. Their feedback could be used as an effective tool.

GOOD PRACTICE

Festival of Learning is the biggest celebration of lifelong learning in England. Festival of Learning celebrates the remarkable achievements of adults who have used learning to transform their lives, and highlights how lifelong learning benefits society and the economy. Since its modest beginnings in 1992, Festival of Learning (previously, Adult Learners' Week) has handed out a variety of learning awards to around 2000 inspiring winners. Over the years, Adult Learners' Week has made a wider case for more adult education opportunities and for more people to take part.
Another good practice from Learning and Work is the involvement of learners in their advocacy campaigns or research studies[14].

[14] Voices of Adult Maths Learners (NIACE 2013): https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Voices-of-Adult-Maths-Learners.pdf

4.6 Invite policymakers to your events

A good strategy for approaching policy makers is to build bridges by inviting them to your events. Take the opportunity to invite them in your conferences, internal events or give them a tour at your premises.

GOOD PRACTICE

Few years ago, the Swedish Adult Education Association (SAEA) arranged a bus tour for the Committee on Cultural Affairs. They wanted to raise their awareness and show them what adult education is – and what it may help to achieve. The bus tour allowed them to visit some local branches of their member-organisations – where actual Folkbildning was carried out as they arrived ("Folkbildning" is the Swedish term for non-formal adult education). They invited all Committee members per post – but we also followed up by phone. With the tour, they achieved better personal contacts with the parliamentarians and the latters gained a better understanding of the diversity that the study associations offer. The activity was a success and had a positive policy impact [15].

4.7 Be patient, professional and persistent

Persuading the policymakers is usually a time-consuming procedure. Be patient, persistent, professional and enthusiastic. It can take some time (and you might have to repeat the process with different people at different levels) until your message has been received, action has been taken and solutions are not just decided but also implemented.

CASE STUDY

ALL DIGITAL has been one of the main contributors to the development and roll-out of the European reference framework on Digital Competences (DigComp). They began endorsing and emphasizing the importance of DigComp in 2014, by updating their online self-assessment tool on digital skills for young people Skillage and aligning it to the 5 competence areas of DigComp. Afterwards, they developed with their member organisations a position paper stressing the necessity for a common European framework that allows a shared understanding of the meaning and implications of digital competence across sectors (and areas of life) and that presents its components and levels of proficiency. The position paper was shared with selected experts from the European Commission and its Joint Research Centre (JRC), and had an impact on the evolution of DigComp, which at that time was in its version 1.0.

[15] https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/arale-general-page-policy-makers-database-a-bus-tour-for-awareness-raising/

In the following years, ALL DIGITAL continued to be an active contributor, by developing the first Guidelines on the Adoption of DigComp at national level for its member organisations covering most of the EU member states. The guidelines present examples of DigComp use and propose recommendations on a better training alignment with DigComp as well as designing new assessment tools for end users.

Between 2015 and 2017, they were involved in consultations and events organised by the European Commission and JRC regarding DigComp. Furthermore, they organised a DigComp 2.0 dedicated workshop at their annual conference in Ghent in 2016 and a webinar on how DigComp can be used in the non-formal education and training field. In 2017, they updated a set of recommendations and worked together with CEPIS and ECDL Foundation on a new position paper to address the implementation of DigComp 2.0.

In 2018, they organised a workshop at ICT2018 Conference in Vienna which explored various opportunities opened up by DigComp, including the possibility to develop a European certification framework on digital competences. Moreover, they lead the Digital Competences Development System (DCDS) project, the first project at EU level that addresses low skilled adults in a comprehensive way, and that consists of a self-assessment tool, training content and validation of skills.

Their policy influence was successful for a number of reasons:
- their involvement since the beginning of the framework;
- their constant participation in relevant events, initiatives and consultations;
- their direct contacts with experts in DG EAC, DG EMPL and JRC working on the topic;
- their knowledge, expertise and experience in relevant projects;
- their access to a network of organisations who implement digital skills trainings, assessment and certification, for whom finding common language and understanding of digital competences is important and meaningful.

5. Monitoring and evaluating advocacy

It is important to constantly monitor and evaluate the advocacy strategy, to make sure that the results of the cause have an effective and verifiable policy impact. This chapter outlines the main procedures used to monitor policy influence and to collect reliable information on the impact of policy influence activities.

5.1. Peer review events

When carrying on a cause, a major opportunity to communicate the cause to target groups are the peer review events. This is an opportunity to invite experts that are considered part of a target group. The main objective of the peer review events is to review and collect feedback on a document (e.g. project output, policy paper, strategic plan). The peer review events highlight the areas of particular interest to policymakers and key stakeholders and thus prevent the dissemination of irrelevant findings, unwarranted claims, unacceptable interpretations and personal views.

TIP

It is useful to plan the dates of the events alongside the dates of other meetings or events.

GOOD PRACTICE

In the DCDS project, partners organised several peer-review events. Five to seven peers working on the project's topic, among which policymakers and key-stakeholders were invited to those events. Prior to the meeting, partners provided participants with the project output and all related documents that had to be discussed and reviewed. In this way a constructive dialogue and exchanges of ideas could be promoted. Participants who cannot attend the events, can have the option to review the deliverable online, through a separate questionnaire (which basically follows the evaluation dimensions applied on the meetings as well). This way, a larger circle of external stakeholders can be engaged and kept updated on project development, while at the same time more insights can be collected from external stakeholders.

Possible questions to be asked in a peer review event are:

- How far does the deliverable/initiative (its approach, content, tools etc.) address / respond the cause in your local context?
- How far does the deliverable/initiative (its approach, content, tools etc.) support the social inclusion of the target group (education, labour market, active participation) in your context?
- What impact could the deliverable (its approach, content, tools etc.) possibly have on your own practice in the field? (External stakeholders' own interests; usefulness, effectiveness, relevance, cost-effectiveness/efficiency, sustainability)

• Can you identify any ideas, approaches, tools in the deliverable/initiative that could possibly be adapted in strategy making (at your level)? (Impact on strategic planning)
• What would you improve in this deliverable and how? (Weaknesses, inconsistencies, gasps, quality, understandability, approach, tools etc.)

The summary report of the event will highlight the reviewers' feedback with the emerging themes so that the deliverable producer/initiative organiser could use the outcomes in order to finalise it and assure its best possible quality and effectiveness.

5.2 Monitoring policy impact of events and dissemination channels

Organisations should be able to monitor the impact on the targeted audience during events and through other dissemination activities. Through a direct and indirect evaluation of such events they will be able to assess how much their cause got understood by both expert audiences and the general public. At the same time, monitoring reactions and engagements towards social media dissemination activities can be useful to check the efficacy and the impact of the message.

Evaluation focus	Aspects to evaluate	Indicators (examples)	Tools	Indicators of long term impact
Dissemination events	Reach of the meetings, events and conferences Profile of participants attending Feedback received	Number and profile of people reached Number of brochures/fliers distributed	During (by asking policymakers to intervene and comment on a certain cause) and after action review (via an evaluation form or direct contacts)	Amendments to policies Increase of funding Better policies Invitation to official consultations and working groups
Other dissemination activities (social media, website, press conferences, media appearances etc.)	Reach of the posts Visibility of the website Attendance of a press conference	Number of people reached Number of likes and shares Number of visitors, clicks	Dissemination reports	

Table 1: Evaluation of activities

5.3 Questionnaires/interview with interested stakeholders

One of the most reliable sources for evaluating your organisation's policy impact is to ask the direct stakeholders if they perceive any change in their day-to-day work/life. This can be done via questionnaires or interviews, online or face to face. If your organisation is membership-based, you can collect those pieces of information via the annual membership survey.

ANNEX 1 - Developing a communication strategy

The basis for an advocacy strategy is an efficient and effective communication strategy. The better you communicate your message, the higher the chance that it will be heard and taken into account. There are certain steps that should be taken to carefully plan and develop a communication strategy:

Step 1: Identify current situation	Identify the current state of art for the issues that have to be addressed. Outline what the organisation aims to achieve with the strategy.
Step 2: Set objectives	What are the communication objectives? It is important that they contribute to the achievement of the overall objectives of the organisation[16]. Determine also what needs to change.
Step 3: dentify your audience	What audience will help you reach your goals? Who do you need to reach?
Step 4: Think about your messages	Once you have identified your audience, the next task is to break down your objectives into relevant messages for each of those audiences. Remember that your messages should be relevant and appropriate to the audience. What do you want audiences to know, think and do? What will motivate them? What unmet needs do they have?[17]
Step 5: Consider communication channels to disseminate messages	Decide which communication channels will best reach the audience. It is effective to use a variety of channels, keeping in mind that there is not one perfect channel[18]. Communication channels could well include face-to-face meetings, events, social media, publications etc.
Step 6: Monitor and evaluate the impact of your communication actions	Evaluate your strategy: What does success look like and how will you know when objectives have been met? How will you evaluate the various steps and tools of your communication? These could be simple measures such as the number of responses to social media activity, hits to your website or number and profile of participants to your events. After the implementation of any communication activity it is important to reflect on "How often were your key messages mentioned and has there been a shift in public attitude on issues you've been campaigning for?[19]" Have you achieved an impact through your communication? What are your learning points that could help you improve future strategies?

Table 2: Steps for planning a Communication Strategy

[16] https://knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/communications-strategy
[17] http://wwwcdn.howdesign.com/wp-content/uploads/communicationPlan.jpg
[18] https://www.thehealthcompass.org/how-to-guides/how-develop-communication-strategy
[19] https://knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/communications-strategy

ANNEX 2 – DCDS policy messages

Digital competences of all citizens is a key priority and cannot wait anymore

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Developing digital competences is not a one-off experience, it is a lifelong learning endeavour

There is a need to increase participation of adults in the information society

Turn the many existing digital competence initiatives into a systemic long-term effort

Creation/ improvement of digital hubs

DIGITAL/LEARNING STRUCTURES

National action plan for digital skills and employment

Support to providers of digital skills for adults

Increase level of basic digital skills of adults from rural areas with low or non-existent skills

TARGET GROUPS

More focus needed on building the digital competences of young people

Adult digital skills personalized assessment and development

Integration with Upskilling Pathways and DigComp 2.0

ADULT EDUCATION

Strengthen the governance of adult education and basic skills in the framework

More funding for Adult Education: face to face learning offers are necessary

Enhancement of adult digital skills as a social inclusion strategy

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Better prediction of changes and the new requirements for market-based / work-driven skills, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility

Note

Note

Note

DIGITAL
COMPETENCES
DEVELOPMENT
SYSTEM